

Wabash Reflections



E – news presented by the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission (WRHCC).



Autumn is gorgeous on the Wabash! The vista of leaf change, traveling from New Corydon to New Harmony over a period of two months, has got to be one of the longest running ‘shows’ in the country. What a perfect time to take that long float down the Water Trail with all those Sullivan County 8th graders! Or, perhaps, to take in one of the numerous trapper rendezvous or historical recreation events! In this issue of Reflections, we’ve got a few stops to make on the eastern end of the river... read on for a glimpse of places and events along the “upper” Wabash Corridor:

- ❖ Allen County – Partnerships Pay for Protection
- ❖ Wabash County – Legends from Geological Formations
- ❖ Wells County – Openings & Use

Allen County: Forging Partnerships in the Little River Valley

The Wabash River traces its way through a great diversity of habitats, geological features, cultures, and populations. Although a small portion of the entire watershed, the upper headwaters of the Wabash are no exception to the varied landscape that characterized Indiana’s largest river.

Jay, Adams, Allen, and Huntington Counties set the stage for the formation of the Wabash as the Little River joins the Wabash and heads out across the state. The Little River Wetlands Project has worked since 1990 to restore, preserve, and protect wetlands within these headwaters. Currently the Project manages over 850 acres from southwest Fort Wayne down the Little River and near the county line. Two 90 acres Arrowhead Marsh and Arrowhead Prairie properties are fully restored while the 670 acre Eagle



Marsh property is in the initial stages of restoration. When complete, Eagle Marsh will be the largest such project in northeast Indiana and the third largest in the state.

The work of the Little River Wetlands Project is one of many tools available to organizations in the Wabash River corridor to help restore and enhance to natural resources of the watershed. As the Project secures more lands within our portion of the Wabash Corridor, we have begun create innovative partnerships in the community to further the mission of Little River. We have forged these new partnerships with local educators, corporations, citizens groups, and local government entities.

One such relationship formed by Little River demonstrates the many benefits in reaching out to all facets of the local community when working to protect the Wabash Corridor's natural resources. American Senior Communities, an Indianapolis-based corporation, is in the final phases of constructing a large, multi-faceted retirement community along the north edges of Eagle Marsh. Most of the residents will enjoy a spanning view of the wetland and its wildlife. Little River approached the corporation to explore cross-promotional activities and possible educational opportunities. After several meetings with local managers and corporate executives, Little River and Coventry Meadows established a wide ranging relationship for the benefit of both organizations and the surrounding community.

This relationship is unique in the world of conservation in its scope. Kicking off with a tree planting ceremony on November 13th of this year, Little River will begin implementing an educational curriculum on the Coventry Meadows campus. Different from our regular lecture series, the curriculum will bring basic wetland science and conservation practices to participants, instilling an appreciation for the work being done at Eagle Marsh and throughout the Wabash Corridor. These lessons will later be brought into practice with a tree planting area, seed collections, and many volunteer activities. Recreational opportunities will be provided to residents and the public alike in the form of walking trails, bird watching platforms, and the like.



Many such opportunities exist for conservation organizations to further our mutual mission. Little River is currently working with Aboite New Trails, a local suburban trails group to create recreational and educational opportunities for the over 300,000 residents of Allen and Huntington Counties. These partnerships allow two organizations to provide a service (financial or not) to the other which enhances the mission of both. Large corporations are seeking the kind of publicity and participation, while land

trusts and other such groups benefit from the resources available to their larger partners. We at the Little River Wetlands Project feel that this type of partnership is the future of conservation in the Wabash Corridor. We have been utilizing GIS-based database information to target our

future efforts, locating potential project areas cross-referenced by population, infrastructure, economic statistics, and natural resources. We are excited to see where these effort lead, and look forward to sharing them with the Commission in the future. Please call (260-478-2515) or email Little River (Excedir@lrwp.org) to discuss these projects or raise any questions.

Other information on Allen County is at: <http://www.in.gov/mylocal/counties/allen/>

Wabash County – Geology Is the Backdrop for Our Legends

The Wabash River valley is a principal geologic feature in every county through which it flows. To our eyes it seems this feature must have always been there though our minds are aware that this is not so – that the valley was scoured into being only 11,000 years ago or so during the retreat of the last glacier. The massive time spans of geologic time permit many unique features to arise, such as “Council Rock” in Cass County (see photo), especially when there is a constant source of wear such as water, wind or, perhaps, man.



One such feature is the peculiar “Dish Pan” rock near the Wabash River town of Richvalley in Wabash County. This rock has a deep depression in the top in a shape rather like that of a dishpan. It is quite possible the pan is the result of the relentless forces of nature but it is also said that the Indians used this rock for millennia to grind corn. By placing the corn in the depression and using another rock like a rolling pin or pestle, the depression worked nicely to contain the corn till mashed into corn meal. Of course, over the years this action would result in some wearing away of the rock; the deepening of the depression.

It cannot be said that man has anything to do with yet another geologic feature in Wabash County; a feature so massive yet random as to be only creditable to nature’s relentless course. “Hanging Rock” is a huge out-cropping of limestone, one hundred feet in height, over hanging the Wabash River near the mouth of the Salamonie River. The top is somewhat rounded by weathering and part of one side has been torn away by the river itself. At the top is a flat space some twenty feet square which commands a broad overlook of the river and valley below. Many young people now climb the same pathway to the top which Miami Indian braves and maidens climbed many years before them.

Wy-nu-sa was one such Miami maiden, a beautiful young woman who thought she was in love with two handsome, strong and stalwart Indian braves. In turn, it seems, both of the young men were also deeply in love with the beautiful Indian maiden and spent considerable effort in seeking her affections. Wy-nu-sa, however, could not decide which of the two braves she wished to marry. Finally she set upon a course which would decide for her.

To the two young suitors Wy-nu-sa said, “You two will have to fight a duel at the top of Hanging Rock at a particular time which I will set. The brave that wins the fight may marry me, but the brave who loses the duel will be plunged to his death in the swirling waters of the Wabash River below the rock.”

The two young men agreed to the plan and a certain moonlit night was scheduled for the duel. On the appointed night the two young men climbed to the top of Hanging Rock to fight for the love of the maiden Wy-nu-sa. Following close behind, the maiden herself climbed to the top also. She stood in the background and watched the contest.

Now secretly Wy-nu-sa loved one of the braves more than the other – a fact she would not admit, even to herself. As the battle raged she found herself reflexively, but silently, rooting for the one brave over the other; urging him by her own silent will to exert himself more strongly, more quickly and with more courage. The contest continued, ebbing and flowing over the minutes of battle as if hours of effort were being expended. Suddenly, in the bright glow of the moon, one brave fell, over the rounded edge of the rock, and plunged to his death in the swirling water of the Wabash below. The victorious brave staggered to his feet, drank in the cool night air and crossed over to Wy-nu-sa to claim her as his bride.

When Wy-nu-sa saw the brave she screamed, “I do not love you! You have killed my own true love. I cannot live without him!” With this exclamation she pushed the brave aside and ran to the edge of Hanging Rock and jumped off, into the raging Wabash. Neither she nor her true love; the brave of her true heart, were ever seen again. It is said among her tribe, those of the Miami Indians, that Wy-nu-sa found her true love that fateful night and they were united at last to live forever in the Happy Hunting Grounds.

You, too, might find true love at Hanging Rock along the mighty Wabash River but, if you do, there is only one thing that is for sure. It is for sure you’ll be at the site of a geologic legend in Wabash County, Indiana.

Wabash County statistical info may be found at: <http://www.in.gov/mylocal/counties/wabash/>

Wells County – There’s Nothing Like Kids to Create A Challenge

The Wabash River never sleeps and, you’d almost think, neither do the youth that have given it their hearts! The autumn found those youth actively out promoting the river, and studying its health, in Wells County.

First, September 10 found the Wabash hosting a National Neighborhood Day event at Kehoe Park. This is the wonderful outdoor amphitheater park, nestled on a flood plain in a bend of the Wabash, used so often in Bluffton



throughout the warm seasons of the year. Wells County used the opportunity of food & fun to hold their Water Trail Grand Opening. Feasting on hotdogs, snacks and pop provided by the Bluffton Parks Department, with chef duties deftly handled by the Bluffton Police & Fire Departments; a substantial crowd filled the overlook and amphitheater to watch martial arts demonstrations, hear voice recitals and, of course, sway, clap and move to the singing and dance moves of an energetic youth group. With the gathering of river heroes from local business and government, the Water Trail Grand Opening briefly held the center of attention. From Bluffton Mayor Ted Ellis to Wells County Representatives, from the Park Department to the Street Department, everyone lent a hand and got into the river picture!



Later, in October, a variety of classes from eighth grade down to second grade made trips to the river to study and learn. The eighth graders did water quality testing (photo is at the bend at Kehoe Park, courtesy of the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette) including both chemical analysis and 'Save Our Streams' style macroinvertebrate (bugs) surveying. For many, it was a first glimpse into our future need to provide clean drinking water in abundant quantities.

The 2nd graders came later in the month. They spent a half a day hiking trails and imagining the fur traders, trappers and Indians who traveled the river so few years ago. Their connection to the area's history, culture and the environment became the central theme. As stated by their teacher Jana Wanner, "The school is very close to the river. I [took] my class on a river walk in late October as a 1/2 day field trip [with some] information [from] the *Wabash: Life on the 'Bright White' River* program. While my students are young (grade 2), they are never TOO young to learn about the Wabash River and how it has affected daily life in Wells County for years."

A "Thumbnail" on Wells County is at: <http://www.in.gov/mylocal/counties/wells/>

Executive Director's Message

Well, as you can tell, there is really no end to the stories from the River. Whether it's our heritage, our culture, the environment or just the fun, the Wabash River provides the place where all Hoosiers can be from; a connection that everyone I've met in the Corridor will make without embarrassment, flinching or hesitation. As I often say as I travel up and down the corridor, "I was born on the Wabash" and I still call it home!

See you on the river.

Ron James, Executive Director